

17

(Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta

The (Fives) Discourse on What Conduces to Escape | A 5.200

Theme: The 5 elements of spiritual freedom

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2018, 2019

1 Sutta summary and highlights

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

1.1.1 Sutta teaching

The **(Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta** (A 5.200) preserves a teaching on the 5 elements of escape (*pañca nissaraṇīya dhātu*), that is, 5 ways of escaper from all our defilements so that we gain spiritual liberation, that is, freedom from the suffering of samsara by way of full awakening or arhathood. In summary, **the 5 elements of escape** are as follows:

<u>“not delighting in”</u>	<u>one mentally attends to</u>	<u>one escapes from the latent tendency of</u>	
(1) sensual pleasures	renunciation	sensual pleasures	[§§2-5]
(2) ill will	good will	ill will	[§§6-9]
(3) (thought of) harming	non-harming	harming	[§§10-13]
(4) form	the formless	form	[§§14-17]
(5) self-identity	cessation of self-identity	self-identity	[§§18-21]

1.1.2 Evolution of the 10 mental fetters

1.1.2.1 The (Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta (A 5.200) is an interesting study that gives vital clues regarding how the teaching on the “elements of escape” (*nissaraṇīya dhātu*) as an ancient set of 5 latent tendencies (*anusaya*): this is probably the earliest formulation of the latent tendencies (*anusaya*). This pentad evolved into the better known set of **the 7 latent tendencies** (*sattānusaya*). This, in turn, evolved into the well-known set of **the 10 mental fetters** (*dasa saṃyojana*). Here, we trace these teaching-sets back to the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala, mūla*) and the 2 root defilements, ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). [Table 2]

1.1.2.2 The set of **5 elements of escape** (*nissaraṇa dhātu*) [1.2] is listed in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33,2.1-(24)/3:240). This shows its importance as a teaching-set to be preserved and perpetuated for our benefit. Although the Saṅgīti Sutta is an index of key teachings—where, as a rule, they are merely listed without any details—the 5 elements of escape are laid out therein just as they are taught in the (Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta (A 5.200).

1.2 THE 5 ELEMENTS OF ESCAPE

1.2.1 Escape from the 5 delights

1.2.1.1 The term “element of escape” (*nissaraṇīya dhātu*) has at least 2 senses as used in the suttas. **The (Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta** (A 5.200) uses the term, firstly, to refer to the attaining of **dhyaṇa**. This is the “element of escape” of all attending to *sensual pleasures, ill will, harming, form or self-identi-*

ty. Instead we should attend to their respective opposites: *renunciation, good will, non-harming, the formless and the cessation of self-identity*. The second sense of **element of escape** refers to the attaining of non-returning or arhathood, the escape from rebirth in the sense-world (AA 3:322,7+14).

1.2.1.2 The Sutta’s commentary explains **the elements of escape** in the following manner. Broadly, **renunciation** (*nekkhamma*) here refers to the letting go of the 5 mental hindrances which leads to the arising of dhyana [§3.2 n]. In the 1st element of escape (escape from mental defilements), however, it refers to the contemplation on **the foul** (*asubha*)¹ which brings about the 1st dhyana (*asubha*) (AA 3:321,16-18). This attainment frees the mind from the hindrance of sensual desire. When sensual lust is fully uprooted, the dhyana can be used as the basis for attaining the 3rd path, **the fruit of non-returning** (*anāgāmi,phala*).

In the 2nd element of escape (according to the Commentary), dhyana arising from **lovingkindness** frees us from the hindrance of ill will. In the 3rd element of escape, dhyana arising from **compassion** rids us of ill will. In the 4th element of escape, we free ourselves from form by attaining **the formless dhyanas**. And in the 5th element of escape, overcoming the notion of self-identity, we gain absolute freedom (*acanta,nissaraṇa*) by attaining **arhathood**. (AA 3:322,4-25) [1.2.1.3]

1.2.1.3 The Aṅguttara Commentary on the (Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta give a very structured and fixed sequence of how the elements of escape bring about once-returning and arhathood. Following the sutta tradition, the process of **escape** (*nissaraṇa*) is more flexible. Basically, spiritual progress starts with our removing the hindrances [2.3.3], which then brings about **the 1st dhyana**.

After that we can go to further cultivate up to the 4th dhyana, with which we can develop the various psychic powers.² However, even without dhyana, with strong wise faith or with some insight wisdom, we constantly reflect on **impermanence**, we will, in this life itself, attain streamwinning³ [3.4.1.3]. In due course, when we work our ready mind to weaken the effects of the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala,mūla*), we will attain once-returning [3.4.2].

However, to attain the next stage of the path—that of **non-returning**—we must properly master at least the 1st dhyana, which escapes us of sensual desire and ill will. Emerging from a dhyana, we then direct our calm and clear mind to remove **sensual lust** (body-base desires) and its opposite, **aversion**. In other words, we remove all the 5 lower fetters [3.2], and attain **non-returning** [3.4.3].

1.2.1.4 It is said that when we overcome the 5 higher fetters [3.5], we attain arhathood. However, before we can work to remove these higher fetters, we should have removed all *the lower fetters*, too. At the lower stages of the path—the streamwinner, the once-returner—they have removed all the remaining fetters before they can attain arhathood. This progress on the path, as we know, is gradual [3.4.3.1].

1.2.1.5 When we look closely at **the 5 delights**—in sensual pleasures, ill will, harming, form and self-identity—the same textual format applies to all of them, thus:

¹ “The foul” (*asubha*) refers either to the cultivation of foulness (*asubha,bhāvanā*): **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 62,-22), SD 3.11; also called the perception of foulness (*asubha,saññā*): **Giri-m-ānanda S** (A 10.60), SD 19.16; **Saññā S 1** (A 5.61), SD 62.19; or the sign of foulness (*asubha,nimitta*): **(Bojjhaṅga) Āhāra S** (S 46.51,15), SD 7.15. In all these cases, it refers to the contemplation of the 31 (or 32) parts of the body (*kaya,gata,sati*). Elsewhere (eg **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss**, D 22,8-11/2:295-299, M 10,10-31/1:57-59), it is the contemplation of the 9 stages of bodily composition (SD 13.-2+3).

² See **Miracles**, SD 27.5a (4.3.7; 5).

³ See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

- (1) when a practitioner's attending to (sensual pleasures, etc), his mind does *not* indulge in it [§2 etc];
- (2) when he is attending to (renunciation, etc), "his mind leaps into it, brightens up, settles, pervades it." [§3 etc];
- (3) "his mind is well gone, well cultivated, well emerged, well freed, well detached from (sensual pleasures, etc) [§3,2 etc];
- (4) "he is freed from those influxes (of defilements) ... that arise with (sensual pleasures, etc) as condition" [§4 etc].
- (5) "this is declared to be escape (freedom from sensual pleasures, etc)."

Briefly, these sentences mean as follows.

- (1) We should not be distracted by any thought of sensual pleasures, etc. Just let them go.
- (2) We should instead attend to its wholesome opposite; thought of renunciation, etc.
- (3) In this way, our mind is "well gone," free from the hindrances; "well cultivated" in dhyana. Then, having "well emerged" from that dhyana, we work to remove any distraction that has arisen.
- (4) Hence, we are "freed from those influxes," that is, from *sense-desire, existence, views or ignorance*. Clearly, this "freedom" refers to only a temporary one, or only to a particular influx.
- (5) The practitioner is one who is freed from delighting in any of the 5 latent tendencies (sensual pleasures, ill will etc).

At the close of the Sutta, the Buddha declares that one, in whom sensual pleasures, etc, "lies not latent in him," delights not in them. Such a practitioner is said to be "**a monk without latent tendencies**" (*bhikkhu niranusayo*) [§23] who "**has made an end of suffering**" (*antam akāsi dukkhassa*) [§24]. In other words, when all these latent tendencies have been removed, that person is **an arhat**. For those who only removes one or more of these 5 latent tendencies would attain the path as a streamwinner, a once-returned or a non-returned.

1.2.2 The 6 elements of escape

The (Chakka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta (A 6.13) contains teachings on the 6 "**elements of escape**" based on the divine abodes. However, in place of the last element, that of "self-identity," there are the "signless freedom" and the "I am" conceit (SD 55.18).

Unlike **the (Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta** (A 5.200), which mentions the attainment of **arhathood**, this is not directly mentioned in **A 6.13**. It lists the 6 ways by which we can attain **dhyana**, in which case "escape" (*nissaraṇa*) refers to overcoming **the 5 mental hindrances** (*pañca nīvaraṇa*): *sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt*⁴ [2.3.3.1]. With the removal of the 5 hindrances, the 1st dhyana arises.

2 Evolution of teaching sets

2.0 Table 2 conveniently shows us how **the 3 unwholesome roots** feed the 5 delights (*nandī*), which, in turn, are the roots of the 7 latent tendencies (*anusaya*)—here shown on 2 levels of application. The set of **5 delights** (*nandī*) is used in meditation instruction, while the set of **7 latent tendencies** (*anusaya*) reflects a broader scope for mental training or psychological analysis of dysfunctional aspects of the mind [2.3]. Finally, there are **the 10 fetters** (*dasa saṃyojana*), which is both a list of negative mental traits that we need to overcome, and a set of benchmarks for reviewing how we progress on the path [3.6].

⁴ See *Nīvaraṇa*, SD 32.1.

The evolution of the 3 roots into the 10 fetters

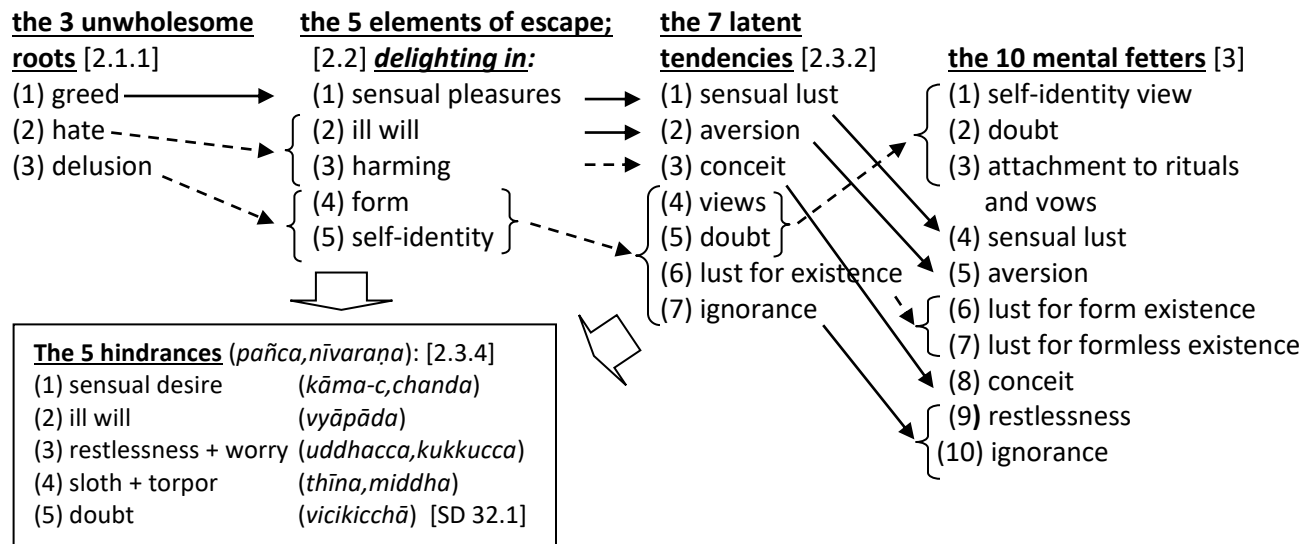


Table 2. From *mūla* to *nandī* to *anusaya* to *saṃyojana*

The Pali for the above terms:

<u>The 3 roots</u>	<u>The elements of escape of: the 5 delights</u>	<u>The 7 latent tendencies</u>	<u>The 10 fetters</u>
<i>akusala mūla</i>	<i>nandī</i>	<i>anusaya</i> [3.3]	<i>saṃyojana</i>
SD 4.14 (1.5)	A 5.200, SD 55.17		SD 10.16 (1.6.6)
(1) <i>lobha</i>	(1) <i>kāma, nandī</i>	(1) <i>rāgānusaya</i>	(1) <i>sakkāya, diṭṭhi</i>
(2) <i>dosa</i>	(2) <i>vyāpāda, nandī</i>	(2) <i>paṭighānusaya</i>	(2) <i>vicikicchā</i>
(3) <i>moha</i>	(3) <i>vihesā, nandī</i>	(3) <i>mānānusaya</i>	(3) <i>śīla-b. bata, parāmāsa</i>
	(4) <i>rūpa, nandī</i>	(4) <i>diṭṭhānusaya</i>	(4) <i>kāma, rāga</i>
	(5) <i>sakkāya, nandī</i>	(5) <i>vicikicchā'anusaya</i>	(5) <i>paṭigha</i>
		(6) <i>bhava, rāga</i>	(6) <i>rūpa, rāga</i>
		(7) <i>avijjā</i>	(7) <i>arūpa, rāga</i>
			(8) <i>māna</i>
			(9) <i>uddhacca</i>
			(10) <i>avijjā</i>

A full-weight (dark) arrow → designates a direct connection.
A broken arrow - - - - -> designates an evolution.

2.1 THE ROOTS, THE DELIGHTS AND THE LATENT TENDENCIES

2.1.1 The 2 root defilements and 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala mūla*)

2.1.1.1 The teachings of the 5 elements of escape (*nissaraṇīya dhātu*) and the 5 delights (*nandī*) preserved in **the (Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta** (A 5.200) are clearly very ancient. They are elaborations of the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala, mūla*) of *greed, hate and delusion*. Technically, these 3 roots work on **the**

preconscious level⁵ in our mind, that is, our intention before we perform a karmically potent act.⁶

The 3 unwholesome roots move us to act through body, speech and mind, or stop us from doing so, in **karmically negative ways**, in this manner:

- **greed** (lust) intends us to seek and cling to what is perceived as sensual pleasure (*kāma*)⁷;
- **hate** (ill will) intends us to reject, even destroy, what is perceived as undesirable;
- **delusion** intends us to keep up, even heighten, our interest or inclination (*nati*)⁸ in these twin actions of liking and disliking.

These 3 roots themselves go much deeper within our being, where they lurk as the 2 root defilements of ignorance and craving.

2.1.1.2 Ignorance is not knowing, both an inability and the unwillingness, even fear, to know good and bad, right and wrong, to learn to choose wisely; to live joyfully. Not knowing on such a fundamental level, we are not sure what to do or where to go that will really and truly benefit us. Hence, we are stuck with an unwholesome inaction.

Ignorance works with **craving** [2.3.2.5], its active partner, that sees things only in black and white, as it were, *liking or disliking*: liking feeds **greed**, disliking feeds **hate**. **Ignorance**, for its part, is blind to *both*, follow craving's feverish lead, driven by the delusion of not seeing true reality, of constructing its own realities. Ignorance and craving are the roots of all the defilements in the teaching-sets [Table 2].

2.1.1.3 The 3 unwholesome roots [2.1.1.1] are so called because they are the source of all our negative actions and feelings. **Greed** not only moves us to seek and collect what we see as pleasurable and, hence, desirable, it also makes us cling to them, to collect such experiences. **Hate** compels us to make a habit (*nati*) of rejecting, hating, even harming and destroying what we see as unpleasurable, hence, undesirable. **Delusion** is ignorance (*avijjā*) blindly led on by craving (*taṇhā*) in arousing and negotiating this duality of unwholesome inclinations.

2.1.1.4 From **Table 2**, we can see how the unwholesome roots, **greed** (*lobha*) and **hate** (*dosa*)—both the preconscious⁹ manifestations of craving (*taṇhā*) are present in the delights, the latent tendencies and the fetters in various forms.¹⁰ As the active partner, craving, working with blind ignorance, brings on all

⁵ On “preconscious,” see SD 17.8b esp (1.1.2; 2.2); SD 7.10 (3.3).

⁶ Conversely, the same works for intending a wholesome act motivated by charity, love or wisdom. I have used “charity, love, wisdom” freely for the 3 wholesome roots of *alobha* (non-greed), *adosa* (non-hate) and *amoha* (non-delusion)

⁷ Note that *kāma* is polysemic, and has 3 important senses: the subjective, the objective, the sense-based. **Subjectively**, *kāma-c, chanda*, “sensual desire” is one of the 5 hindrances (*nīvaraṇa* [SD 32.1]; *kāma, rāga*, “sensual lust,” one of the 10 fetters (*samjōyana*) [SD 10.16 (1.6.6)]; *kāma, taṇhā*, “sensual craving,” one of the 3 cravings (*taṇhā*) [SD 53.38 (1.2.3)]; *kāma, vitakka*, “sensual thought,” one of the 3 wrong thoughts (*vitakka*) [SD 10.16 (6.3.2.1)]; *kām'āsava*, “sensual influx” (*kām'āsava*), one of the 3 or 4 influxes (*āsava*) [SD 30.3 (1.3.2)]; and *kām'upādāna*, “sensual clinging,” one of the 4 clingings (*upādāna*) [SD 5.17 (4.4.2)]. **Objectively**, *kāma* is the 5 “cords of sensuality” (*kāma, guṇa*), arising through the 5 physical senses [SD 6.11 (2.2.2.6)]. *Kāma* as simply denoting the 6 senses (the 5 physical senses + the mind) refers to the “**sense-based**” world, one of the 3 worlds (as *kāma, loka*), elemental realm (as *kāma, dhātu*), existential spheres (as *kāmāvacara*) [SD 29.6b (7.2)]. On *kāma, dhatu* as “element of wrong thought”: SD 29.8 (2.2). On the first 2, see BDict: *kāma*; see also under other headings.

⁸ On *nati*, see SD 50.2 (1.1); SD 50.4 (1.5).

⁹ On preconscious, see (2.1.1.2).

¹⁰ Study **Table 2** by following the arrows leading from each of the 3 unwholesome roots, noting how they evolve in the other teaching-sets: the delights, the latent tendencies and the fetters.

our sufferings. Ignorance keeps us stubbornly stuck in the jammed highway of suffering, unaware of the path less taken (the noble eightfold path)¹¹ which leads away from the madding crowd into the space of true freedom.

2.1.1.5 In §22 of the (Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta (A 5.200), these 3 unwholesome roots are listed as **the 5 delights** (*nandī*) or **latent tendencies**, as follows (as reflected in **Table 2**):

greed (<i>lobha</i>)	takes the role of:	(1) the latent tendency of delighting in	<u>sensual pleasures</u> ;
hate (<i>dosa</i>)	takes the roles of:	(2) the latent tendency of delighting in	<u>ill will</u> , and
		(3) the latent tendency of delighting in	<u>harming</u> ;
delusion (<i>moha</i>)	takes the roles of:	(4) the latent tendency of delighting in	<u>form</u> , and
		(5) the latent tendency of delighting in	<u>self-identity</u> .

This transaction shows how the 3 unwholesome roots take on the roles of **the 5 delights** (*nandī*), an early set of conditions described as “lying latent” (*anuseti*) in us. In other words, these are deep-seated or compulsive habits we have and on which we act, creating the kind of person we are and the world we imagine to live in. Hence, this is a prototype, an early set, of **7 latent tendencies**. [2.3.2]

2.2 WHAT ARE THE 5 DELIGHTS?

2.2.1 The 5 delights arise from the 3 unwholesome roots

2.2.1.1 The **5 delights** (*nandī*) are an elaboration of the 3 unwholesome roots [2.1.1.1]. We have noted that this pentad is used in meditation instruction and practice [2.0] to help identify those deep-seated negative habits that become hindrances to meditative progress. In this sense, we can also see them as the 5 delights as the prototype of **the 5 mental hindrances** which must be overcome before we can attain dhyana. [2.3.1.2]

2.2.1.2 As we have seen [2.1.1.2], the components of the 3 unwholesome roots (*mūla*) and the 5 delights (*nandī*) closely reflect one another. The 1st of the 3 roots, **greed**, is synonymous with the 1st delight, that is, delighting in sensual pleasures. The 2nd root, **hate** plays two roles in delighting: it delights in ill will and in harming others. In other words, there is a negative feeling towards another, and also the desire to act on that feeling to harm another.

The 3rd root, **delusion**, plays 2 tricky roles: delighting in form and in self-identity. These are 2 deep-seated inclinations. Basically, the former, delighting in form, involves directing our attention outwards towards the world of sense-objects, including our thoughts [2.2.2]. The latter, delighting in self-identity, is a profound self-centred preoccupation at various levels of narcissism [3.1.3.5].

2.2.2 Delighting in form

2.2.2.1 We will now examine “**delighting in form**” (*rūpa, nandī*). When we look at the 5 delights as a set, we may conclude that “**form**” here—especially that it precedes “delighting in self-identity” [2.2.3]—has a broad *psychological* sense rather than a narrow technical sense that developed later into **the fetters** of lust for form and lust for the formless [2.3.2]. Moreover, we see doctrinal elaborations of this delight in the list of the 7 latent tendencies which are *psychological* in nature.

¹¹ On the noble eightfold path, see SD 10.16.

2.2.2.2 Form (*rūpa*) is how we objectify our sense-experiences: give “names” to “forms” (from which arise name-and-form, *nāma,rūpa*) [2.2.2.3]. This is how we sense the world of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts, by **naming**, that is, “value-adding,” them as being *desirable* (when perceived as pleasant), or *undesirable* (when perceived as unpleasant), or to be *ignored* (when they do not register any response). In acting so, we think, will give us a handle of them. The implications of this last process will be discussed later [3.2.6.2].

2.2.2.3 In the dependent arising formula, this aspect is called “**name-and-form**” (*nāma,rūpa*). But at this early stage in doctrinal development, it simply describes how we sense the “**all**” (all our senses) to project our virtual world, as described, for example, in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23).¹² In short, this is how we conceive and perceive the external world: how we *create* our virtual world and live in it.¹³ This is a macrocosmic or cosmological view of the self; on a microcosmic or psychological (personal) level, there is the arising of “**self-identity**” (*sakkāya*) [3.1.3].

2.2.3 Delighting in self-identity

2.2.3.1 Note that while we see the 5th and last delight listed as **self-identity** (*sakkāya*), the 1st mental fetter is **self-identity view** (*sakkāya,ditṭhi*). This difference is significant. Doctrinally, self-identity is a broad term that encompasses both the view (identifying with one of the 5 aggregates) [3.1.3.5] and the idea of attaining rebirth, of assuming some higher existence (such as the form world or the formless world). Self-identity view is basically the view arising from identifying with any of the 5 aggregates.

2.2.3.2 With the progressive destruction of the fetters, the stages of the path is stages: when doubt and the self-identity view, “This I am,” are removed, there is streamwinning; but the conceit “I am” is removed only by arhathood, as explained in **the Khemaka Sutta** (S 22.89).¹⁴ The persistence of doubt signifies that we still have the conceit “I am.”¹⁵

2.2.3.3 In other words, **the streamwinner** is free of any idea of identifying with any of the aggregates, **the arhat** is not only free from all self-identification, since he fully understands the nature of **non-self** (*anattā*). The streamwinner still has some level of *sensual lust*, *aversion* and has yet to overcome *the higher fetters* [Table 2]. Here again we see a gradual progress on the path or awakening [3.4.3.1].

2.3 WHY THE 5 DELIGHTS?

2.3.1 Teaching the early disciples

2.3.1.1 The brevity and simplicity of **the (Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta** (A 5.200) attest to its being an early text, recording teachings given to early disciples. Due to the formulaic nature of the teaching, it was clearly *not* given any of the saints in the 1st period, especially the 1st 20 years of the ministry, who became *ehi bhikkhus*.¹⁶

¹² S 35.23 (SD 7.1).

¹³ On *nāma,rūpa*: in the 5 aggregates (*khandha*), see SD 17.1a (4); SD 17.2a (12); in dependent arising (*paṭicca,samuppāda*), see (**Paṭicca,samuppāda**) **Vibhaṅga S** (S 12.2,11) n, SD 5.15.

¹⁴ S 22.89/2:126-32 (SD 14.13).

¹⁵ See **Me: The nature of conceit** (SD 19.2a).

¹⁶ An *ehi,bhikkhu* is one who, upon merely listening to the Buddha’s teaching attain the path, especially arhathood. Hence, by virtue of their awakening, they are already members of the noble sangha. Upon their request to be

It is very likely, then, that this kind of teaching was given to those who renounced as de jure monastics, that is, they were ordained by a sangha act (*saṅgha,kamma*).¹⁷ They were the renunciants who were given teachings such as the 5 elements of escape. [Table 2]

2.3.1.2 Renunciants who are taught **the 5 elements of escape** learn not to delight in sensual pleasures, in ill will, in harming, in form, and in self-identity. Note that significantly absent is the mention of **doubt** (*vicikicchā*) which features both as a latent tendency and as a mental fetter. In other words, these renunciants are those with deep faith. They merely need to overcome distractions that hinder their **meditation** before they become arhats.

Here, we see the beginnings of the teaching-set on **the 5 mental hindrances** which help the meditator identify mental states that hinder meditative progress. Over time, the components of the mental hindrances reflect aspects of **the latent tendencies** lurking deep in our unconscious.¹⁸ By identifying these latent tendencies through a calm and clear mind, we are able to see them for what they really are.¹⁹ In this way, we are able to overcome these hindrances, we will attain a good level of meditation, and then use that mental clarity to cultivate insight wisdom.

2.3.2 How the 5 delights evolved into the 7 latent tendencies

2.3.2.1 Both **the 5 delights** (*nandī*) and **the 7 latent tendencies** (*anusaya*) are sets with overlapping components [Table 2]. **The 1st delight** to be avoided is that in sensual pleasures (*kāma,nandī*), which is basically not reacting to thoughts that would preoccupy us with desirable mental states. Instead, we prevent the mind from doing so and calm it down.

Similarly, **the 1st latent tendency** is that of sensual lust (*rāgānusaya*), which refers to both not attending to an unwholesomely desirable state, but also not seeking such mental stimulations. This should be done not only during meditation but whenever they arise.

2.3.2.2 Whether we are meditating or not, we may notice **the 5 delights** and consciously let go of any delight in sensual pleasures (*kāma,nandī*) or of its opposite, the delight in ill will (*vyāpāda,nandī*). Similarly, the 1st 2 **latent tendencies** are those of sensual lust and its opposite, aversion (a more deep-rooted condition of *hate*), both of which we can only recognize on a *conscious* level. Hence, on this level, we should work to keep the mind constantly free from the twin negative emotions of lust and hate.

2.3.2.3 The 3rd **delight** is that in harming (*vihesa*), which is mental violence directed to oneself, but more so to others. On the other hand, **the latent tendency** of conceit (*māna*) is, on a deeper level, a subtler form of dislike and harming arising from measuring oneself against others. Being **conceited** is our unwholesome reaction to seeing others as being *better than*, or *inferior to*, or *equal* with us. We resent such states, coloured with lust, hate or delusion, that is, we delight in or we hate any of them, or we are ignorant of the true state of things [3.2.2.2].

2.3.2.4 Rooted in **delusion** (the 3rd and last of the 3 unwholesome roots) are the last 2 **delights**—in form and in self-identity—and **latent tendencies** (4)-(7)—those of *views*, *doubt*, *lust for existence and ignorance*. These are the branching out of **delights** (4)+(5). Ideas about form and self-identity are found in

ordained, the Buddha himself accepts them by uttering *ehi,bhikkhu*, “Come, O monk!,” *etha bhikkhave*, “Come, O monks!” or “Come, O nun! (*ehi bhikkhunī*): SD 45.16 (1).

¹⁷ On *saṅgha,kamma*, see SD 45.16 (3.2.3).

¹⁸ On the unconscious, see SD 17.8a (6.1). For details, see **The unconscious**, SD 17.8b.

¹⁹ On how this should be done, see **Nimitta and anuvyāñjana**, SD 19.14.

latent tendencies (4)-(7) at various levels. We have already noted the psychodynamics of delight in **form** (*rūpa*) and in **self-identity** (*sakkāya*) (the former in some detail, the latter only in brief) [2.2].

Psychologically, delight in form is how we habitually *reify* our sense-experiences, collecting and freezing them, as it were, to form fixed ideas of what they are, how we *see* them to be or *want* them to be—thus creating our very private, very limited virtual world [2.2.2]. On account of such formations (fully, “karma-formations” or “karmic activities”) we feed **the latent tendencies**: we form *views*, from which arise *doubts*, which incite in us *a lust for existence* (such as to “be” this, to “have” that); thus, we keep on feeding *ignorance*. This is the jungle of wild imaginings infesting the deep darkness of our unconscious [2.3.1.2].

2.3.2.5 In the abysmal depths of our unconscious lurk the twin lords of darkness, **ignorance** (*avijjā*) and **craving** (*taṇhā*). Ignorance is blind and craving lame. So ignorance carries craving on its shoulders; craving tells ignorance where to go, and ignorance blindly obeys. Being blind, however, ignorance often stumbles; it also often tires of being told where to go and often goes its own blind way.²⁰ [2.1.1.2]

This dark tendency of blind viewing, **delusion**, in turn, pulls the strings of our “creative” mind of forming and formations on the conscious stage of delight. Delusion is how we look at things through the coloured lenses of greed or hate, which in turn feeds the delusion [3.2.2.1]

2.3.2.6 We can thus see how **the 5 delights**—*in sensual pleasures, in ill will, in harming, in form, and in self-identity*—need to be corrected so that we can see our mental reactivity as being conditioned by sense-stimuli. It is not that we should stop sensing—although it clearly helps to restrain them (rejecting unwholesome sense-experiences)—but rather we should understand that the *conditioned* is mind-made; hence, *impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self*.²¹ When we fully know and see this, then, we have won “**the 5 elements of escape**” (*nissaraṇīya dhātu*) of the delights [1.1.1].

Since **the 5 delights** occur in our conscious mind, we can neutralize them *as they arise*. These 5 delights are our mental inclinations. The arhats, the first of whom is the Buddha himself,²² are excellent meditators who have recognized and uprooted these delights.

While we are still unawakened, the roots of the delights, however, lie dormant in our unconscious as the 7-headed Hydra of **latent tendencies**, which rear their fearsome heads at the slightest growl or bark of the 3-headed Cerberus of the unwholesome roots. **The 7 latent tendencies** (*anusaya*) are the 7 Hydra-heads that need to be totally and constantly severed since they habitually regenerate and devour the good that is in us.

This set of 7 tendencies reflects a broader scope for mental training or psychological analysis of the dysfunctional aspects of the mind [2.0]. We must first get to know our mind as it really is; then, we tame it, by beheading Hydra and defanging Cerberus; thus, we free the mind.

2.3.3 How the 5 delights and the 7 latent tendencies evolved into the 5 hindrances

2.3.3.1 As we have noted [2.3.2.6], when, on a conscious level, we are drawn to *sensual pleasures, ill will, harming, form or self-identity*, **these 5 delights** need to be overcome immediately. Furthermore, we should recognize any signs of **the latent tendencies** distracting us by way of *sensual lust, ill will, conceit*,

²⁰ The diabolical duo of ignorance and craving work together to bring what in legal jargon is known as “wilful blindness”: see eg Margaret Heffernan, *Wilful Blindness*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2011. See also SD 31.3 (2.2); SD 40a.8 (2.1.1); SD 40a.1 (11.2).

²¹ On these 3 characteristics, see SD 1.2 (2); SD 18.2 (2.2).

²² See **Sambuddha S** (S 22.58), SD 49.10; **Pavāraṇā S** (S 8.7), SD 49.11.

views or doubt [2.3.2]. While it is not difficult to notice any *delight*, since they arise consciously, it takes some careful attention and effort when working with the mental plays of the unconscious²³ *tendencies*.

To help us directly deal with the arisings of *conscious* delights and the *unconscious* tendencies, the Buddha introduces the teaching-set of **the 5 mental hindrances** (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*)—*sensual desire, ill will, restlessness and worry, sloth and torpor, and doubt* [Table 2].

2.3.3.2 The set of **5 mental hindrances** arose from the overlapping effects of the 5 delights (*nandī*) and the 7 latent tendencies (*anusaya*). Notice that the first 2 components of the 3 sets—sensual pleasure/sensual lust and ill will—are either synonymous or near-synonymous [Table 2]. They are listed as the 1st and the 2nd mental hindrances respectively, with the 1st hindrance now called “sensual desire” (*kāma-c, chanda*), the combined forces of *sensual pleasures* (the 1st delight) and *sensual lust* (the 1st hindrance), of enjoying pleasures and wanting more. [Table 2]

The 3rd **delight**—in harming—is actually part of the 2nd hindrance. This shows the 3rd **latent tendency**—restlessness and worry (*uddhacca, kukkucca*)—is also tinged by conceit, ill will and mental violence [2.3.2.3]. The significance of this dynamic is this: when we measure ourself against others (as better than, inferior to, equal with), there is always some kind of *ill will*, thought of *harming*, some kind of mental violence—especially common in religious intolerance! Such a negative mental state incites *restlessness* (*uddhacca*), or when we think of what all this will lead to, there is *worry* (*kukkucca*).

2.3.3.3 The 4th **hindrance**—that of sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*)—is just the opposite of the 3rd hindrance: after a prolonged bout of *restlessness and worry*, the meditator is likely to tire mentally and physically. There are, of course, other causes of such lethargy,²⁴ but this dynamic between the 3rd and the 4th hindrances is sufficient for our discussion here, relating to how the **hindrance** pentad evolved from the *anusaya* septad and the *nandī* pentad, both, in turn, being rooted in the *akusala, mūla* triad. [Table 2]

2.3.3.4 The 5th **delight** is that in self-identity (*sakkāya*), the most powerful interplay of *views*, especially self-views (*attānuditṭhi*), notions about oneself and the self, of what one *was* or *will* be or *is* even now, and so on²⁵—all such thoughts are rooted in **delusion**. **The Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2) lists at least 16 such **doubts** (*kathaṅ, kathā*).²⁶ Hence, the 5th **latent tendency** is that of doubt is the same as the 5th **mental hindrance**. Both this tendency and this hindrance are rooted in the 3rd unwholesome root, that is, doubt.

2.3.3.5 Clearly absent from **the 5 hindrances** are the last 2 latent tendencies: lust for existence and ignorance. This is understandable since these 2 latent tendencies are powerful existential defilements which can only be noticed and removed by deep meditation.

First, the hindrances need to be removed so that we attain a mind freed from the limits of the body and its senses, that is, in attaining *dhyana* (*jhāna*). Emerging from this profoundly joyful state, we shine the brilliant light of our calm and clear mind into its darkest recesses to expose the subtly pervasive lust

²³ “Unconscious” describes the latent tendencies, in the sense that they have built up over a whole life-time, over many lives, deep in our mind’s dark recesses, so that we are unaware of them, especially when they strike. [2.3.1.2]

²⁴ **Pacalā S** (A 7.58) records how the Buddha teaches Moggallāna to overcome sloth and torpor during meditation (SD 4.11).

²⁵ See eg **Bhadd’eka, ratta S** (M 131), SD 8.9.

²⁶ The “16 doubts” (*kathaṅ, kathā*) are listed in **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2, 7 f/1:8), SD 30.3, **Mahā Taṇhā, saṅkhaya S** (M 38, 23/1:265), SD 7.10, & **Paccaya S** (S 12.20/2:26 f), SD 39.5. In **Paccaya S** (S 12.20), it is said that one who sees dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) with right wisdom would not speculate in these ways (S 12.20.18-20/2:26 f). See **Bhadd’eka, ratta S** (M 131), SD 8.9 (3). On doubt as a hindrance, see **Vicikicchā**, SD 32.8.

for existence, which are the **mental fetters** (*samyojana*) of lust for form and for formless existence (related to the attaining of the form dhyanas and the formless attainments).²⁷

The root defilement, **ignorance**, infests all defilements. It is removed when all the defilements have been uprooted, as in the arhat. Understanding **the 5 hindrances** helps us see what is hindering our mental cultivation; thus seen, we are better prepared to remove it, or at least restrain it, so that we progress in our practice, especially meditation. [3.2.2.2]

3 How the 7 latent tendencies evolved into the 10 fetters

3.1 THE NATURE AND SEQUENCE OF THE 10 FETTERS

3.1.1 The 10 fetters as a set

3.1.1.1 From **Table 2**, it is evident that the list of **the 10 fetters** (*dasa samyojana*) is the longest of these teaching lists. The set of 10 fetters lists all the key workings of the 3 unwholesome roots in our actions, speech and mind. It is a comprehensive list of what fetters us to samsaric (cyclic) lives and sufferings. Only when we have broken all these fetters are we free and awakened.

3.1.1.2 Compared to the other teaching-sets presented here, **the 10 fetters**, as a set, is the most developed of them; hence, it is *the latest* of these sets of teachings. In the Majjhima Nikāya, apparently, only **the Mahā Māluṅkyā Sutta** (M 64) mentions the fetters; even then, it lists only the subset of the 5 lower fetters.²⁸ The Saṃyutta Nikāya, too, mentions the 10 fetters in subsets, as the lower fetters and the higher fetters.²⁹ The decad of fetters is, however, listed fully in the Dīgha, the Aṅguttara and the Vibhaṅga.³⁰

3.1.2 The 1st 3 mental fetters

3.1.2.1 **The 10 fetters** are both a list of negative mental traits that we need to overcome for a happy and free life, as well as a set of benchmarks for reviewing how we are progressing on the path [3.6]. The most significant of the 10 fetters are **the 1st 3 fetters**—self-identity view [3.1.3], doubt [3.2.2], and attachment to rituals and vows [3.2.3]. Indeed, we can only overcome all the 10 fetters by *first* removing these 3 fetters, which makes us **streamwinners**, those who actually start progressing on the path of awakening.³¹

Self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), the very 1st of the 10 fetters, is also a counterpart of the 5th and last delight, that of **self-identity** (*sakkāya*). The 5 delights, we have noted [2.3.2.6], are overcome by seasoned renunciants who are good meditators [2.3.1]. They first overcome sensual pleasures and ill will, which are the twin aspects of **craving**, a primal defilement. When *ill will* has been overcome, harming, too, is overcome. Like sensual pleasures and ill will, *harming*, too, is a **preconscious** aspect of craving.

When these 3 aspects of craving have been removed, even temporarily, we are ready to stop delighting in form [2.2.2]. When we stop delighting in *form*—we are not fixated to ideas that *form* (conceive) in

²⁷ See **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 16,34.2-43), SD 1.11. On the 4 form dhyanas, see SD 8.4 (5). On the 4 formless attainments, see SD 24.11 (5).

²⁸ **Mahā Māluṅkyā S** (M 64/1:432-437), SD 21.10. [Table 3].

²⁹ **Oram, bhāgiya S** (S 45.179/5:61), SD 50.22 & **Uddham, bhāgiya S** (S 45.180/5:61), SD 50.23.

³⁰ **Mahāli S** (D 6,13/1:156), SD 53.4; **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.1(7-8)); **(Sekha) Uddesa S** (A 3.85/1:231 f), SD 3.3 (2); **(Dasa-ka) Saṃyojana** (A 10.13/4:17); **Vbh** 377; see also SD 11.1 (5.1.4); SD 10.16 (1.6.6-8).

³¹ See **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

our minds regarding external *forms*. A mind that is not fixated on views is now capable of not delighting in self-identity, the 5th and last of the delights. [3.1.3.2]

3.1.2.2 The 10 fetters, on the other hand, are a guide-list of defilements that a neophyte or a weak practitioner has to deal with, or at least be aware of, so that they can be avoided or restrained. Most of such practitioners are from the middle or the last period of the ministry,³² when numerous brahmins and other upper-class candidates join the order.

They have been raised conditioned by the brahminical view of the **self** and soul, by the view that to the brahmins are the way to **heaven**, and by various brahminical **rituals**. Such pre-conditionings would surely cause them to have some **doubts** regarding the Buddha Dhamma. The most common wrong view they may have are regarding the nature of **self, faith and rituals**. For this reason, attachment to self-view, doubt and attachment to rituals and vows—the “3 fetters”—are listed first. This is to help them to let go of their erstwhile views.³³

3.1.3 The 1st mental fetter: self-identity view

3.1.3.1 Self-identity view (*sakkāya, ditṭhi*) is the very 1st fetter, the primary fetter, which forms a significant subset of its own. It is listed first because it must be removed before the other fetters can be eradicated. Self-view is present in some form in the other fetters as some kind of idea of an abiding self or eternal essence (*attā*). However, **non-self** (*anattā*) is only fully understood by the arhat, who has removed ignorance, the 10th and last fetter.

3.1.3.2 Etymologically, *sakkāya*, “self-identity,” is understood in two ways: as “own-body” (Skt *sva-kāya*) and as “existing group” (*sat, kāya*). The former belief, that in self-identity or “personhood” (being a person) is pre-Buddhist, as evident from the Sanskrit term, *sva, kāya*, “own body.” This is a belief in some kind of abiding self or eternal essence, especially the brahminical *brahman* (neuter) or universal soul,³⁴ with which our consciousness (personal soul) re-merges after death (with the proper performance of certain rituals by the brahmins). The Buddha unequivocally rejects such a belief.³⁵

The latter view is rooted in the notion of *sat, kaya*, “existing body or group,” which is essentially the wrong view that the impermanent components (*kāya*) of our being are in fact real (*sat*). This wrong view manifests itself as the misconceptions of a “real” self: the “I” (*ahaṅ, kāra*), a “self-fabrication,” and of “mine” (*mamaṅ, kāra*), a “self-feeding”—the notion of a self and its projections, that is, how one exists in terms of the “group” that is the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*). [3.1.3.4]

3.1.3.3 In the Cūḷa,vedalla Sutta (M 44), the nun Dhamma, dinnā, famously declares to the layman Visākha that self-identity is the 5 aggregates of clinging (*pañc’upādāna-k, khandha*), that is, *form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*.³⁶ The qualifier “clinging” (*upādāna*), which also has the sense of “fuel,” means that we *cling* to them by identifying with them in some way, and in doing so, we *fuel or feed* them, thus perpetuating our samsaric existence.

³² On the 2 periods of the Buddha’s ministry, see SD 1.1 (2.2); SD 40a.1 (1.3). On the middle period, see SD 40a.1 (1.3.2.3); SD 54.8 (1.1.3.3).

³³ **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38) records the monk Sāti as still holding on to the Brahminical view of an abiding soul (SD 7.10 (2)).

³⁴ See SD 1.8 (1.1.2).

³⁵ See esp **Te, vija S** (D 13), SD 1.8.

³⁶ M 44,2/1:299 (SD 40a.9).

The self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*) is symptomatic of our worldly being, rooted in a notion of “self-identity” (*sakkāya*: Skt *sva, kāya*), fabricated by a self-projecting group (*sakkāya*: Skt *sat, kāya*) of psychophysical factors, that is, the 5 aggregates of clinging. Instead of accepting them as they really are—impermanent, unsatisfactory, non-self—we tend to identify with them, appropriating them with our greed, hate and delusion. This is how suffering arises.

3.1.3.4 The true reality is that we are nothing but **the 5 aggregates of clinging**. We have a conscious body, which is the “all” (*sabba*) or totality of our senses and its functions: this is **form** [2.2.2.1]; hence, we have **feelings**, how we *affectively* react to these sense-experiences based on **perception**, *recognizing* them from our past experiences. This perceiving often reaches a level when we “value-add” them: seeing them *conatively* as more or less what we expect of them, pleasant or unpleasant, or seeing them as neither—these are our karmic **formations**. All this occurs *cognitively* as we accumulate our knowledge of the virtual realities *mentally* projected over the true realities (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, non-self) [2.3.2.6] of the 4 elements [3.2.1.2] that comprise all that exist.

3.1.3.5 Self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), then, is a mistaken belief in an abiding self in terms of each of the 5 aggregates [3.1.3.3] in these 4 ways (the 4 self-identity views):³⁷

- (1) seeing the aggregate as the self (such as that the body itself is the self or soul, as in materialism);
- (2) seeing the self as possessing the aggregate (such as that of an eternal soul separate from the body);
- (3) seeing the aggregate as in the self (such as that the human “soul” is a “spark” of the universal Soul);
- (4) the self as in the aggregate (such as a disembodied that can leave the body).

When these 4 self-identity views are applied to each of the 5 aggregates, we have a total of **20 “self-related views”** (*attā’nudiṭṭhi*). This is a well-known psychological dynamic found throughout the 4 Nikāyas and the Abhidhamma.³⁸ Doctrinally, the 1st view is rooted in an annihilationist view (*uccheda, diṭṭhi*)³⁹ while the rest are rooted in an eternalist view (*sassata, diṭṭhi*),⁴⁰ which includes the creator-God idea. A survey of these views are laid out in **the Pārīleyya Sutta** (S 22.81).⁴¹ [3.2.3.2]

3.2 THE LOWER FETTERS

3.2.1 Self-identity view as a fetter

3.2.1.1 The twin root-defilements are ignorance and craving, from which all defilements arise. **Ignorance** and **craving** perpetuate themselves by their own relative modes of activity (as doubt) and activity (as lust). The prongs of this dichotomy feed each other like a **uroboros** devouring its own tail. The head is *craving*; the tail *ignorance*; the former leads the latter; the head feeds on the tail: craving feeds

³⁷ See **Is there a soul?** SD 2.16 (15), details (15.2.1); also SD 40a.8 (3); 40a.12 (3.2.4).

³⁸ **Cūla Vedalla S** (M 44,8/1:300), SD 40a.9; **Mahā Puṇṇama S** (M 109,10/3:17 f = S 22.82/3:103 f), SD 17.11; **Isi-datta S 2** (S 4:287 ×2); **Vaccha, gotta S** (S 4:395, 396, 397×2); **Dhs 1003/182 = 1217/212 f** (*atta, vād’upādāna*), 1262-/221. Cf **Bhadd’eka, ratta S** (M 3:188 f), **Ānanda Bhadd’eka, ratta S** (M 3:190 f), **Uddesa Vibhaṅga S** (M 3:227 f); S 3:3, 4, 16, 17, 42, 44×2, 46, 56, 102×2, 113, 138, 164, 165; A 2:214 f; Nc:Be 186 (“self-view,” *attā’nudiṭṭhi*), 271; Pm 1:143, 149, 150×2, 156; also SD 40a.8 (3) self-identity view.

³⁹ On annihilationism, see **(Vaccha, gotta) Ānanda S** (S 44.10), SD 2.16(5); SD 40a.1 (7.2.2.2).

⁴⁰ On eternalism, see **Dhamma, cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11,9.12), SD 1.1; SD 19.3 (2.2).

⁴¹ S 22.81,12-30 (SD 6.1); SD 40a.8 (3.3). On the 4 noble truths of self-identity: **Sakkāya S** (S 22.105) SD 42.21. On the impermanence of the “self”: **(Catukka) Sīha S** (A 4.33) SD 42.15. On letting go of self-identity: **(Mahānāma) Gīlāyana S** (S 55.54,18.2), SD 4.10.

on ignorance. This cyclic existential dichotomy projects the mirage of false meaning and false purpose to us: this is how our **self-identity view** (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*) burdens us not knowing what to do and doing it anyway: this is the ignoble quest.⁴² [2.1.1.2]

Our ignoble quest, which keeps us in the desert of ignorance, is spurred on by **the mirage** of self-identity. A mirage, as we know, is as real as the desert heat and dry sand; we can see it even though it is not really there. It is all mind-made; a wrong reading of earth, water, fire and wind.⁴³ Its effects on us are *virtually* real. We act and feel this uroboros or samsara, a cyclic process: we see what we want to see; we mentally *project* what we *see*; what we see *reaffirms* what we have become. So, too, with what we *hear, smell, taste, touch and think*. I am this; this is me; this is mine.⁴⁴ This is the endless cycle of the **self-identity view**. [3.1.3]

3.2.1.2 To weaken the power and influence of ignorance and craving, it is most effective to start with identifying or acknowledging how we create and maintain a **self-identity view** [3.1.2]. Basically, this starts with the understanding that we are nothing but body and mind. If there were an abiding self or eternal soul, it would be connected with either *the body or the mind*.

Our **body** is nothing but the 4 elements—*earth, water, fire and wind* (solid, liquid, heat and gas)⁴⁵—none of which is permanent. Hence, it is impossible that anything unchanging is to be found here. Then, there is the **mind**—*feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*—none of which is permanent, too. The meaning of this is that it is all **impermanent**; our life's purpose is to get out of the desert of self-identity by keeping to the path heading for the oasis of awakening. [2.2.3]

3.2.2 Doubt as a fetter

3.2.2.1 The 5 lower fetters (*orāma, bhāgiya saṃyojana*) [Table 2] evolved from the latent tendencies (1), (2), (4) and (5), that is, *sensual lust, aversion, views and doubt*, respectively. Amongst the latent tendencies, doubt is the least “active”: it just lies (*anuseti*) dormant in our unconscious like thick mud in which it is difficult to walk, and any progress is slow and tedious. Hence, it is a potent retardant to our personal and spiritual growth. Basically, it is a sign of a lack of learning the truth, a refusal to diligently seek for understanding reality, and a failure to work for inner peace and freedom.

The other latent tendencies, on the other hand, are quickly and easily activated. Since doubt, as it were, “deactivates” us socially, morally, psychologically and spiritually, we only need to be mentally “active” with wisdom to weaken and remove it. Wisdom here includes the proper application of knowing. We keep our mind in “**learning mode**”: first, we work to recognize doubt; then, we seek its cause; next, study how to end or correct the cause; and finally, take the path that is doubt-free.

When we have removed, even weakened, the self-identity view, doubt is easily overcome. When we lack wisdom (liberating knowledge), doubt will easily reappear, too. To effectively dismantle doubt, we need to understand how it arises from **the twin root-defilements**, ignorance and craving.⁴⁶

⁴² On the ignoble quest (*anariya pariyesanā*), see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,5-12) SD 1.11.

⁴³ On the 4 elements, see **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 11,8-11, with §12 on “space”) SD 3.11. See foll n.

⁴⁴ See **I: The nature of identity** (SD 19.1); **Me: The nature of conceit** (SD 19.2a); **Mine: The nature of craving** (SD 3).

⁴⁵ This is a simplified modernist summary. Technically, the earth element is whatever is *solid*, incl resistance, heaviness, roughness, etc; the water element is fluidity, incl cohesiveness; the fire element is heat, esp decay and incl metabolism; the wind element is the breath (air), bodily gases, peristalsis, movement. See prec n.

⁴⁶ On why we doubt, see SD 40a.8 (4.1).

3.2.2.2 On account of our **ignorance**, we are not sure where to go or what to do. Hence, we are stuck with inactivity [3.2.2.1]. It is an unwholesome inactivity: it's like we are suffering pain or loss but we are unable to do anything about it. We do not even know *what* action to take: this is **ignorance**. Even when we do act, we may doubt that it will help at all; or we easily forget the strategy that has worked for us and fall back into our old bad habits. [2.2.2.4]

Ignorance works with **craving**, that spurs us to act even when we are ignorant of how to do it and uncertain of its outcome. Often, then, we take a wrong step, we grasp at straws. The result only aggravates the situation, it often becomes disastrous. When we keep acting in ignorance, we tend to repeat a lie, a falsity, believing it to be true or real. Ignorance is samsaric. [2.3.2.5]

3.2.3 Attachment to rituals and vows (as a fetter)

3.2.3.1 We mentioned that ignorance breeds doubt, so that we are caught in a rut of repeating ourselves in useless, even harmful, habits. This is, in fact, the 3rd of the 10 fetters, that is, **attachment to rituals and vows**, an insidious habit feverishly feeding doubt [3.2.2.2]. This doubt-ridden habit is aggravated by self-identity view [3.1.3; 3.2.1].

When we hold on to a **self-identity view**—when we identify with any of the 5 aggregates that compose our being [3.1.3.3]—we desire some kind of control and security over what we identify with, whether it is the body or the mind, or both. In other words, we see ourselves as “owning” what we identify with.⁴⁷

The Buddha teaches us that this idea of **owning** the “self” causes us to be intoxicated (*mada*) with notions of **youth**, of **health** and of **life**. Our intoxication with youth (*yobbana,mada*) causes us to fear aging, even detest the elderly. Our intoxication with health (*ārogya,mada*) causes us to be attached to our body and to fear ill health. Our intoxication with life (*jīvita,mada*) causes us to fear change, impermanence and death.⁴⁸

3.2.3.2 For the sake of **control** over youthfulness and health, we see them as “blessings” or “grace” from an external, divine source, from some kind of almighty agency, such as God. For our **security** or survival, we fall into some “eternalist” view that we have an “immortal Soul” that survives death and continues to exist in some kind of eternal heaven or glorious paradise.

Such false views are fed by the belief that by repeating an action or speech makes it true or real. This is the meaning of *sīla* here.⁴⁹ Indeed, when we keep repeating a lie, it soon appears to be true; when we keep thinking that something bad is good, we start to believe it is so. This a “**ritualistic**” tendency that imprisons our mind in an endless cycle of repetitive action. Such unhelpful, even harmful, **rituals** include praying, prostration, calling divine names, and so on. Such habits only strengthen the walls of self-identity view around us, keeping us trapped like the proverbial frog in the well views and doubts.

3.2.3.3 In the phrase, attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), **vows** (*vata*) refer to how we see our duties, observances and practices, especially religious ones. Basically, a vow is how we ritually act, believing that we will tap the power, glory or blessings of some imaginative deities, cosmic

⁴⁷ On our identifying with the aggregates, see **I: The nature of identity**, SD 19.1. On our idea of “owning” them, see **Mine: The nature of craving**, SD 19.3.

⁴⁸ See **Mada S** (A 3.39), SD 42.13.

⁴⁹ Here, *sīla* does not mean “moral virtue,” esp when we understand how it works to prepare our body and speech for mental cultivation and wisdom. However, when we think that keeping the precepts makes us “purer” than others, for example, then, it is ritualism.

Buddhas, eternal Bodhisattvas, even demons, who will succour us with a false sense of control and security.

Often, by such a vow, we ritually *identify* with our object of reverence or worship. In other words, we are “owning” that object—which may be a deity or a holy figure, such as a teacher or guru, living or dead—this is, of course, a dark shadow of the self-identity view [3.2.1.1]. In this connection, the Buddha declares that the best prayer or **supreme worship** (*parama, pūjā*) is not to adore him, but for us to practise the Dharma for self-liberation.⁵⁰

Understanding the nature of symbolic figures and symbolic acts is helpful. Such symbolisms depict certain wholesome qualities that we should cultivate (not worship them). In this context, a **vow** is merely making a statement without understanding what the resulting state entails.⁵¹

In **the parable of the raft**, the Buddha points out that even wholesome teachings are merely means for our spiritual progress on the path of awakening. They are like a raft we have put together for crossing the waters to reach the safe shore on the other side (representing nirvana). When we have crossed over, it is not helpful to keep carrying the raft with us.⁵²

3.2.4 Sensual lust and aversion (as fetters)

Mental fetters (4) and (5) are, respectively, **sensual lust** (*kāma, rāga*) and its opposite, **aversion** (*paṭigha*) [Table 2]. This pair is very similar⁵³ to the first 2 latent tendencies (*anusaya*), the first 2 delights (*nandī*), and the first 2 unwholesome roots (*akusala, mūla*). They are actually the twin aspects—liking and disliking—of the root defilement, **craving** (*taṇhā*).

The unawakened mind is rooted in craving: when we *lust* or *like* something, it means that there are things that we do *not* like, even *hate*. This is a **relative reality**, conditioned reactivity, based on measuring ourself against others, comparing this with that in our sense-experiences. We are compelled by our perception of what brings us pleasure to desire it, and what brings pain to reject it.

What we perceive as bringing **pleasure**, we see as desirable. Every time we react with *sensual lust*, we feed the latent tendency of **lust** (*rāgānusaya*). What we perceive as bringing **pain**, we regard as undesirable. Every time we react with *aversion*, we feed the latent tendency of **aversion** (*paṭighānusaya*).

3.2.5 Tracing the evolution of the teaching sets

3.2.5.1 *In this section, you are recommended to stop reading, and to carefully study **Table 2**. Trace the arrows, beginning with **the root delusion** right through the delights, the latent tendencies, and the fetters. This will give you an idea of the evolution of **delusion** in these teaching sets. After that continue reading the rest of this section.*

3.2.5.2 Now, look at **Table 2** closely again, reading from **the unwholesome root of greed** (on a pre-conscious level) [2.1.1.1], and see its role as **delighting** in sensual pleasure (on the conscious level), which then feeds the **latent tendency of sensual lust** (on an unconscious level)—then, this reappears as the 4th **fetter**, sensual lust (on a conscious level again), which we can then remove through meditation.

⁵⁰ **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,5.3.2) + SD 9 (7.2).

⁵¹ See SD 10.16 (1.3.2.3); SD 49.5b (4.6.4.2).

⁵² **Alaggadūpama S** (M 22,14), SD 3.13.

⁵³ The only difference is that the latent tendency of lust is a broader term which encompasses the fetter of sensual lust, which includes lust arising through sense experiences. In the list of fetters, the subtler *mental* lust covered by lust manifested in the last 5, ie, the “higher fetters” [3.3], esp in the lust for form and for formlessness, and in a subtle form in (8) conceit, (9) restlessness and (10) ignorance.

3.2.5.3 Then, look at **Table 2** again, this time starting with the 2nd **unwholesome root**, that is, hate → **the delight** in ill will → **the latent tendency** of repulsion → the 5th **fetter**, aversion. Notice how **greed**, in its various forms, and its opposite, **hate**, in its various forms, work together as a pair.

3.2.5.4 *Now comes an interesting development:* we are left with only the 3rd and last **unwholesome root**, delusion. *Again, follow the evolution or development of the root **delusion**.* It evolves into **the delights** in (4) **form** and in (5) **self-identity**, which evolve respectively into **the latent tendencies** (4) views and (5) doubt. Both these latent tendencies evolve into **the last 5 fetters**, called the “higher fetters” [3.3], except for **conceit** which is also latent tendency (3). [2.3.2.3]

3.2.6 How does ignorance control us?

3.2.6.1 We have already noted how whenever we lust after a *desirable* sense-experience—“**delighting** in sensual pleasures”—we feed **the unwholesome root** greed (on a preconscious level) [2.1.1]. This *root* goes down deep into the unconscious as **the latent tendency** of sensual lust. Hence, when we delight in *sensual pleasures*, we feed the root *greed*, which then feeds the latent tendency of *sensual lust*.

Then, *in a parallel development*, recall how whenever we hate an *undesirable* sense-experience—“**delighting** in ill will”—we feed **the root** hate (on a preconscious level). This *root* goes deep into the unconscious as **the latent tendency** of aversion. When we delight in *ill will*, we feed the root *hate*, we only strengthen the latent tendency of *aversion*.

3.2.6.2 Now, whenever we **ignore** an experience or mental state that is *neither pleasant nor unpleasant*—what we are *unfamiliar* with⁵⁴—we feed **the latent tendency** of ignorance.⁵⁵ As in the case of a pleasant state or an unpleasant, so, too, for a neutral state: it should be reflected as being “**impermanent**.” In this way, we do not feed the latent tendency of ignorance. For, we have seen that neutral state as it really is.

For better understanding of **the 3 unwholesome roots**, the Buddha laid down their various aspects as **the 7 latent tendencies** (*sattānusaya*). These tendencies are rooted in our unconscious, defining and directing almost every action of our unawakened life. Understanding the septad helps us with a better understanding of how our mind works from its deepest dark roots, through its unconscious tendencies to its preconscious roots [2.1.1.1]. [3.3]

3.3 THE 7 LATENT TENDENCIES

3.3.1 From the 3 roots to the 7 latent tendencies

Briefly, this is how **the 3 roots** evolved into the 7 latent tendencies. **The Ariya, vāsa Sutta 2** (A 10.20) lists **the 3 unwholesome roots**—greed (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*)⁵⁶—which are then listed in **the Pahāna Sutta** (S 36.3) as **the 3 latent tendencies**: those of lust (*rāgānusaya*), aversion (*paṭighānusaya*) and ignorance (*avijjā’nusaya*).⁵⁷

⁵⁴ A meditation beginner, esp one without proper guidance, may experience a profound sense of stillness. He is so unused to this that he does not know what to do. Doubt or panic may arise, as a result. Here, we should simply see that stillness as being “mind-made,” “impermanent.”

⁵⁵ See SD 31.3 (1.1.2).

⁵⁶ A 10.20,12/5:31 (SD 43.15).

⁵⁷ S 36.3/4:204-206 (SD 31.1); also **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,25/1:303,6-11), SD 40a.9. Of the 7 latent tendencies, these 3 are especially correlated with *feelings*. On the set of 7, see (**Satta**) **Anusaya S** (S 45.175/5:60), SD 19.1.

Let us recap. In the **(Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta** (A 5.200), we have **the 5 delights** which it calls “latent tendencies” [§22]. These are **the 5 latent tendencies**, perhaps the earliest formulation of the tendencies in the suttas. The next stage is that of **the 7 latent tendencies**, which are listed in 4 Nikayas⁵⁸ as follows:⁵⁹

(1) the latent tendency of sensual lust; ⁶⁰	<i>kāma,rāgānusaya</i>
(2) the latent tendency of aversion;	<i>paṭighānusaya</i>
(3) the latent tendency of conceit;	<i>mānānusaya</i>
(4) the latent tendency of views;	<i>diṭṭhānusaya</i>
(5) the latent tendency of doubt;	<i>vicikicchā’nusaya</i>
(6) the latent tendency of lust for existence;	<i>bhavānusaya</i>
(7) the latent tendency of ignorance.	<i>avijjā’nusaya</i>

3.3.2 How did the 7 latent tendencies evolve?

3.3.2.1 An easy way to understand how the set of **7 latent tendencies** evolved is to see it as comprising 3 consecutive parts: the first 3 fetters [3.4.1]; the first 5 fetters (the lower fetters) [3.4], and the last 5 fetters (the higher fetters) [3.5]. We have already discussed in some detail the doctrinal significance of the first 3 fetters (which form a set) [3.1.3]: **self-identity view** [3.1.3; 3.2.2], **doubt** [3.2.2] and **attachment to rituals and vows** [3.2.3]. The importance of this triad is evinced by the fact that it is often called “**the 3 fetters**” (*ti,samyojana*) [3.4.1.2].

3.3.2.2 In practical terms, **the 3 fetters** [3.3.2.1] evolved from **the latent tendencies** of (4) views [2.3.2.4] and (5) doubt [3.2.2]. These 2 latent tendencies, in turn, evolved from the delighting in (4) form and in (5) self-identity; and this pair, in turn, evolved from **the 3rd unwholesome root**, delusion. The 3 fetters, then, are the portals of **the 10 fetters**. Once these 3 fetters are broken down, the meditator is able to work and resolve the rest of the fetters and become a streamwinner. [3.4.1.2]

3.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LOWER FETTERS⁶¹

3.4.1 The “lower” fetters as a subset

3.4.1.1 **The Mahā Mālunkya,putta Sutta** (M 64) gives a list of 5 latent tendencies (*anusaya*), which are there called “**the 5 lower fetters**” (*oram,bhāgiya samyojana*), but are listed thus:

(1) The latent tendency of self-identity,	<i>sakkāya,diṭṭhānusaya</i>
(2) The latent tendency of spiritual doubt,	<i>vicikicchānusaya</i>
(3) The latent tendency of attachment to rituals and vows,	<i>sīla-b,bata,parāmāsānusaya</i>
(4) The latent tendency of sense-desire,	<i>kāma,rāgānusaya</i>
(5) The latent tendency of ill will.	<i>vyāpādānusaya</i>

(M 64,3/1:432 f), SD 21.10. [1.3;1.6.7]

⁵⁸ **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.3(12)/3:254, 282); **Cha,chakka S** (M 148,28/3:285), SD 26.6; **Anusaya S** (A 7.11+12/4:9); **Paṭi-sambhidā,magga** (Pm §587/123); **Vibhaṅga** (Vbh §816/341, §949/383); **Yamaka** (Yam 268; cf Nyanatiloka 1971: 104).

⁵⁹ See SD 31.3 (1.1.4); SD 54.2e (2.4.1.4).

⁶⁰ These terms can also be tr as “the latent tendency *that is ...*”

⁶¹ The subset of 5 lower fetters is found in **Mahā Malunkya S** (M 64/1:432-437), SD 21.10, and **Oram,bhāgiya S** (S 45.179/5:61), SD 50.22.

These latent tendencies are called “lower fetters” in **M 64** because they are always present, lying latent in the unawakened mind. They are called “lower fetters” because they bind us to **the sense-world**. In other words, these are the psychological characteristics that define life and being in our universe of the senses. This includes the human world, the subhuman planes (animals, pretas and hell-beings),⁶² and the 5 sense-world heavens.⁶³

3.4.1.2 Of these sense-based worlds, the **human** state is the best because we see change more often and more directly. Even though our lifespan is significantly shorter than that of any divine being, we are able to attain the path even within that short time. The long-lived gods rarely attain the path on account of their neither seeing nor reflecting on **impermanence**.

Although we, born amongst humans, have a human body, it is rare that we are really or fully human: we tend to have subhuman inclinations lust, hate, violence, fear, delusion.⁶⁴ The 5 precepts⁶⁵ remind us of the value of being human, and the possibility of evolving even into beings when we duly cultivate our mind and heart to rise beyond the limitations of the human senses through the dhyanas (*jhāna*).

As worldly humans, we are often caught in the snare of **self-identity view**, we tend to identify with our body, forgetting that it is impermanent, or wishing that it were not. Instead of learning from our past—how we have changed—we tend to live our life trying to shape and reshape our past.

We tend to look to the future as if we have no present, or a present that we dislike. Hence, we are often burdened with **doubt**, a lack of self-confidence in our own goodness and potential for it.

Instead of looking within our hearts, the source of our doubts, we seek answers *outside*. Instead of learning from impermanence, we imagine that repeating things make them real and true. We keep talking about good and glory without any real level of understanding them. We keep repeating, recycling, our deeds, speech and thoughts, hoping thereby to catch and hold happiness. This is the fetter of **attachment to rituals and vows**. [3.2.3]

3.4.1.3 Looking at **Table 2**, starting with **the mental fetters** (1)-(3): overcoming them we gain stream-winning. This means that we are no more troubled by **the latent tendencies** of views and doubt; that we take **delight** neither in form nor in self-identity, since we now have a better understanding of the nature of **the root** that is delusion.

We may still see ideas of *form* or *self* arising, but we also see them passing away. We stop noticing this only when **the latent tendencies** of lust for existence and ignorance are fully removed from our unconscious: this happens only when all the 10 fetters are overcome, that is, on attaining arhatood.⁶⁶

As a streamwinner (*sotāpanna*), seeing our body and mind as they really are, impermanent, we break free from **the 3 fetters** of *self-identity view*, *doubt and attachment to ritual and vows*; in psychological terms, *narcissism*, *other-dependence and superstition*. We gain self-understanding, emotional independence⁶⁷ and constant joy. This way we become a beacon for others to see the right path that we have reached.

⁶² On the subhuman planes, see SD 2.22 (1.7); cf SD 10.16 (1.6.6.7).

⁶³ The 6 sense-world heavens are the 4 great kings, the 33, Yāma, Tusita, Nimmāna, ratī and Para, nimitta, vasavatti. On the 6 sense-world heavens, see SD 1.7 (App). For details, see SD 54.3a (3.4-3.6).

⁶⁴ On being human and the subhuman states: SD 48.1 (5.2.4).

⁶⁵ On the 5 precepts, see **Dīgha, jānu S** (A 8.54,13) SD 5.10; **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7), SD 1.5 (2); **Silānussati**, SD 15.11 (2.2); SD 21.6 (1.2); SD 37.8 (2.2).

⁶⁶ See eg the case of Mahānāma, who, even a once-returner is assailed by thoughts of greed, hate and delusion: **Cūḷa Dukkha-k, khandha S** (M 14), SD 4.7.

⁶⁷ See **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

A **streamwinner**⁶⁸ is the true traveller on the path of awakening, a journey that goes not beyond 7 lives before we gain arhathood, that is, full awakening.⁶⁹ When we die as a streamwinner, we will have a rebirth that is conducive to spiritual practice—we will never die in vain.⁷⁰

3.4.2 The once-returner

When, as a streamwinner, we diligently work to lessen our tendency to lust, to hate, to be blurred—and go on to weaken the 3 unwholesome roots [2.1.1], we become a **once-returner** (*sakad’āgāmī*). The once-returner is so called because he will be reborn only one more time to exhaust all the fruits of his karma. Then, he attains nirvana.

Like the streamwinner, the once-returner, too, possesses all **the 5 faculties** (*pañc’indriya*): *faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom*.⁷¹ Both streamwinning and once-returning is attained through the constant reflection of impermanence with either faith or wisdom.⁷² We should remember, too, that we need to attain streamwinning first, on the basis of which we go on to attain once-returning. Of course, one who well understands the nature of the 3 unwholesome roots, reflecting on impermanence, may attain streamwinning, and then almost immediately, attain once-returning.⁷³

3.4.3 The non-returner

3.4.3.1 The progress on the path of awakening is gradual.⁷⁴ we start off with **streamwinning** [3.4.1.2] by removing the 3 fetters [3.1.2]. When we further reduce our inclination towards the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hate and delusion), we attain **once-returning** [3.4.2]. When, with the help of our dhyana attainment, we remove **fetters** (4) sensual lust and (5) aversion (which are the same as the first 2 latent tendencies), we attain **non-returning**.

3.4.3.2 As a **non-returner**, we are free from sensual lust; we are in no way troubled by any of the sense-stimuli. In other words, we have overcome **the 5 lower fetters** [Table 2]. To attain such a state means that we must truly and habitually experience a “transsomatic” joy, that is, pure mental joy. Such joy comes only from dhyana (*jhāna*) experience.

When we attain non-returning, we still retain our human form. Even in human form, we are no more inclined towards sensual or bodily pleasures. Since we have experienced dhyanic bliss and have mastered dhyana meditation, we do not see any joy in sensual pleasures. We have matured from being children; hence, we give up all our childhood toys and ways, so to speak.

From the suttas, we learn that when a human non-returner dies, he is reborn in one of the pure abodes (*suddh’āvāsa*)⁷⁵ according to the level of dhyana that he has mastered.⁷⁶ According to their mode of attaining nirvana, there are 5 kinds of non-returners.⁷⁷

⁶⁸ See S 22.109, SD 17.1a(2.3); SD 10.16 (11); SD 52.10a (1.2.2.2-1.2.2.3).

⁶⁹ On the types of streamwinner, see **Sa, upādi, sesa S** (A 9.12, 8-10), SD 3.3(3); SD 10.6 (11.4).

⁷⁰ See eg **(Gati) Mahānāma S 2** (S 55.22), SD 23.1b; **(Mahānāma) Gilāyana S** (S 55.54), SD 4.10.

⁷¹ On the 5 faculties (*pañc’indriya*), see SD 10.4.

⁷² See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7; SD 10.16 (1.6.6.1-1.6.6.6; 11).

⁷³ See SD 10.16 (1.6.6.7; 12).

⁷⁴ See SD 10.16 (1.6.9).

⁷⁵ The pure abodes (*suddh’āvāsa*) are the 5 highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa, loka*) inhabited only by non-returners who live their last lives there before becoming arhats and attaining nirvana. These worlds are Āviha (“Non-declining”), Ātappa (“Unworried”), Sudassā (“Clearly Visible”), Sudassī (“Clear-visioned”) and Akaṇiṭṭhā (“Highest”) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46).

⁷⁶ On the 5 kinds of non-returners according to pure abode where they arise in, see SD 2.17 (4.4).

3.5 THE HIGHER FETTERS

3.5.1 What are the “higher” fetters?

3.5.1.1 The 5 higher fetters form the last 5 of the 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojanā*), as listed in the **Uddham, bhāgiya Sutta** (S 45.180), thus:

(6) greed for form existence,	<i>rūpa, rāga</i>	
(7) greed for formless existence,	<i>arūpa, rāga</i>	
(8) conceit,	<i>māna</i>	
(9) restlessness,	<i>uddhacca</i>	
(10) ignorance.	<i>avijjā</i>	(S 45.180/5:61), SD 50.12

Four of the higher fetters are found in the set of **7 fetters**.⁷⁸ Fetters 6-7 arise from *the latent tendency of lust for existence*. The fetter of restlessness arises from *the latent tendency of doubt*.

The arhat has overcome all these 10 fetters.⁷⁹

3.5.1.2 We can trace the evolution of the **5 higher fetters** [35.1.1] as follows. Fetters (6) **lust for form** and (7) **lust for the formless** (that is, respectively, desire for rebirth in the form world and the formless world) are the branching out of the latent tendency of lust for existence. The fetter of **conceit** is the same as the latent tendency (3). The last 2 fetters (9) **restlessness** and (10) **ignorance** evolved from the last latent tendency (7) ignorance.

3.5.1.3 The higher fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya saṃyojana*) are so called because they hold us back in the form world and the formless world, which are beyond the sense-world, but where we are still stuck in samsara. The form and the formless worlds comprise meditative realms, lasting for astronomically long periods of time. At the end of their lifespan in these worlds, those who are worldlings (not yet attained the path of awakening) will usually be reborn in lower states due to the exhaustion of their good karma.

3.6 THE 10 FETTERS AS BENCHMARKS FOR THE PATH

3.6.1 The fetters and the path

The **10 mental fetters** distinguish and define the 4 stages of sainthood—streamwinning, once-returning, non-returning and arhathood,⁸⁰ that is, *the states of the 4 noble individuals* (monastic or lay who

⁷⁷ The 5 kinds of non-returners, according to their mode of attaining nirvana, are: (1) an attainer in the intermediate state (*antarā, parinibbāyī*), (2) an attainer of nirvana upon landing (*uoahacca, parinibbāyī*), (3) an attainer of nirvana without exertion (*asañkhāra, parinibbāyī*), (4) an attainer of nirvana with exertion (*sa, sañkhāra, parinibbāyī*), (5) one bound upstream, heading for the Akaniṭṭha realm (*uddhamsoto akaniṭṭha, gāmī*). See **Bojjhaṅga Sīla S** (S 46.3,14-18), SD 10.15. See also SD 2.17 (4.4). Further details on the non-returner, see SD 10.16 (1.6.7; 13).

⁷⁸ The alternate set of 7 fetters comprise: complaisance (*anunaya*), aversion (*paṭigha*), views (*diṭṭhi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), conceit (*māna*), lust for existence (*bhava, rāga*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). They are listed in **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.3-13)/3:254 (called “latent tendencies,” *anusaya*, at (12), prec it), (**Sañkhitta**) **Saṃyojana S** (A 7.8/4:7), (**Saṃyojana**) **Pahāna S** (A 7.9/4:8).

⁷⁹ On the 10 fetters, see SD 10.16 (1.6.6-1.6.8).

⁸⁰ In Pali, these are respectively: *sotāpatti*, *sakadāgami*, *anāgāmi* and *arahatta*; in the Comys: *sotāpānatā*, *sakadāgāmita*, *anāgāmitā* and *arahatta* (PmA 1:8).

have attained the path or nirvana).⁸¹ The differences amongst the 4 kinds of noble individuals are best understood in terms of the 10 mental fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*), traditionally listed as follows:⁸²

(1) <u>self-identity view</u> ⁸³	<i>sakkāya,ditthi</i>	} <u>The 3 fetters: streamwinner</u> +3 roots ⁸⁴ weakened: once-returner
(2) <u>spiritual doubt</u>	<i>vicikicchā</i>	
(3) <u>attachment to rituals and vows</u> ⁸⁵	<i>sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa</i>	
(4) sensual lust	<i>kāma,rāga</i>	} <u>The 5 lower fetters: non-returner</u>
(5) repulsion	<i>paṭigha</i> ⁸⁶	
(6) greed for form existence	<i>rūpa,rāga</i>	} <u>The 5 higher fetters: arhat</u>
(7) greed for formless existence	<i>arūpa,rāga</i>	
(8) conceit	<i>māna</i>	
(9) restlessness	<i>uddhacca</i>	
(10) ignorance	<i>avijjā</i>	

Table 3. The 10 fetters and sainthood⁸⁷ [SD 49.14 (2)]

3.6.2 The arhat

3.6.2.1 The highest goal in early Buddhism is to become just like **the Buddha**, an awakened being, fully understanding the true nature of reality that frees us from suffering and rebirth—that is to be **an arhat**.⁸⁸ The only difference between the Buddha and the other arhats is that the Buddha is the first awakened being to arise in our universe; the arhats are his followers who awaken following him.⁸⁹

3.6.2.1 The arhat is one who has overcome **the 5 higher fetters**. However, the path of awakening is a gradual one [3.4.3.1]. We must first of all reach the path as a streamwinner, and from there progress up the path until we attain arhathood. The path, then, is cumulative in the sense that the arhat has actually overcome *all* the 10 fetters.

This means that the arhat has also uprooted **the 7 latent tendencies**, fully cultivated the 5 elements of escape (by not delighting in any of **the 5 latent tendencies**, that is, the 5 delights) [§23], transformed **the 3 unwholesome roots** into charity, lovingkindness and wisdom. Above all, the arhat has fully overcome the twin root-defilements of **ignorance and craving**. [Table 2].

⁸¹ On the 4 individuals—*sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi* and *arahata*—see **Aṭṭha Puggala S 2** (A 8.60), SD 15.-10a(2).

⁸² On the 10 fetters & sainthood, see **Kiṭṭa,giri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5.1).

⁸³ See **Antā S** (S 22.103), SD 14.1.

⁸⁴ “3 roots” = the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala mūla*): greed, hate and delusion.

⁸⁵ See **Kukkura,vatika S** (M 57/1:387-392), SD 23.11.

⁸⁶ In some places, *paṭigha* is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*).

⁸⁷ For details, see SD 10.16 (1.6.6-1.6.8); **Kiṭṭa,giri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5.1.4); **(Sekha) Uddesa S** (A 4.85), SD 3.3 (2). See also SD 40a.1 (15.4.4) n; SD 49.14 Table 2.

⁸⁸ See SD 10.16 (1.6.8; 14).

⁸⁹ See **Sambuddha S** (S 22.58), SD 49.10; **Pavāraṇā S** (S 8.7), SD 49.11.

3.7 CONCLUSION

3.7.1 The (Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta (A 5.200) is an early text that exhorts us to cultivate **the 5 elements of escape** by not delighting in *sensual pleasures, ill will, harming, form and self-identity*. When we have accomplished this, we become “**a monk who is without latent tendencies**” [§23]. The term “monk” here is not a *status* but a state of mind resulting from true renunciation, that is, the giving up of all mental defilements. Such a renunciation can and need to be cultivated by both the monastic and the lay person.⁹⁰

3.7.2 Monasticism is the ideal environment for taking the “straight path” of awakening that a monastic who has truly renounced the world can quickly reach the journey’s end. A lay practitioner, on the other hand, still enjoying a worldly life but guided by the 5 precepts and understanding impermanence, also takes the same path: the only difference is that a lay practitioner moves on the path at a relatively slower speed. Yet a morally virtuous lay person will reach the path well before a monastic who neither loves the Dharma nor respect the Vinaya.

In either case (whether we are monastic or lay), we should strive diligently to remove **the 3 fetters**.⁹¹ When this is done, we have started our journey on the path of awakening, and will reach nirvana in a matter of time. The longest journey begins with the first step, that of reflecting on impermanence, whether we aspire to streamwinning or not. The fruit of this wholesome habit is that we will become at least a streamwinner: we are then surely on the way to full awakening, just like the Buddha. **The (Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta** (A 5.200) teaches us how to do this.

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⁹⁰ On “monkhood” or better “monkness” (*bhikkhu, bhāva*) as a state we can and need to cultivate, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,3A) + n, SD 13.3; SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5); SD 16.7 (1.1.1.2).

⁹¹ For details on the 3 fetters, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

(Pañcaka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta

The (Fives) Discourse on What Is Connected with Escape

A 5.200

1 “Bhikshus, there are these **5 elements of escape**.⁹² What are the five?

(1) Sensual pleasures and renunciation

2 Here, bhikshus, when a monk is attending to **sensual pleasure**,⁹³ his mind does not leap into them,⁹⁴ does not brighten up, does not settle, indulges not in them.⁹⁵

3 But when he is attending to **renunciation**,⁹⁶ his mind leaps into it, brightens up, settles, pervades it.⁹⁷

3.2 His mind is well gone,⁹⁸ well cultivated, well emerged, well freed, well detached from sensual pleasures.⁹⁹

⁹² *Nissaraṇīya dhātuyo*. Comy glosses *nissaraṇīya* with *visaṃyutta*, “detached, disconnected,” and *dhātuyo* with *atta, suñña, sabhāvā*, “a nature empty of self.” (AA 3:321,4) [1].

⁹³ “Mentally attending to sensual pleasure,” *kāmaṃ manasikaroto*: Be Ee so; Se Ke *kāme*; *kamaṃ*. Although *kāme* seems grammatically preferred since the foll phrase has *kāmesu* (pl loc), in practice, we can only attend to a single kind of sensual pleasure at a time. *Kāmaṃ* can also be taken as uncountable. Comy: “Having emerged from dhyana based on an unattractive object, he directs his mind towards the sensual pleasures for the purpose of investigating them, just as one who has taken an antidote for the sake of testing a poison.” (AA 3:321,6-9). Subcomy: “Such a monk does not mentally attend to sensual pleasures under the influence of defilements. Instead, he investigates: ‘My mind is now fixed in renunciation. Why would sensual thoughts arise?’” (AAṬ:Be 3:74,6-8)

⁹⁴ “Does not leap into them,” *kāmesu cittaṃ na pakkhandati*, lit, “the mind does not leap into sensual pleasures.”

⁹⁵ The phrase “His mind does not leap into them [sensual pleasures] ... indulges not in them” (*kāmesu cittaṃ na pakkhandati na-p, pasīdati na santiṭṭhati na vimuccati*) is stock: **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28/1:186), SD 6.16 without *na*; **Mahā Māluṅkyā S** (M 64/1:435), SD 21.10; **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122/3:112 x4), SD 11.4; (**Ovāda**) **Channa S** (S 35.87/3:133 f), SD 11.12; **Jambālī S** (A 4.178/2:165 f x4); (**Pañcaka**) **Nissaraṇīya S** (A 5.200/4:245 f x5), SD 55.17; **Tapussa S** (A 9.41/4:439-447 passim), SD 62.16; **Diṭṭhi, gata S** (It 2.2.12/43), SD 57.6; etc; cf Miln 325 f. All MSS read *vimuccati* here, which Comy glosses with *adhimuccati*, here rendered as “indulges (in)”: see foll n. See Sadd 478,15 = Dhātml 1105.

⁹⁶ Comy says that “**renunciation**” (*nekkhamma*) here refers to the 1st dhyana attained through cultivating the foul (*asubha*) (AA 3:321,16-18) [1.2.1.2]. “Renunciation” here, then, refers to the letting go of the 5 mental hindrances [§3.2 n].

⁹⁷ “Pervades it,” *adhimuccati*, which has a range of meanings: “inclines to; believes, is sure of; concentrates on.” Due to the wholesomeness of the mental object, the mind is drawn to it, indulges in it. See prec n.

⁹⁸ Following Be Ce Se *sugataṃ* (Ee *sukatam*, “well-constructed”). Comy supports the former, glossing it as “well departed because it has gone into the object” (*gocare gatattā suṭṭhu gataṃ*, AA 3:321,20. *Sugataṃ* is “well gone” in the sense that the mind has *well gone away* from the defilement, which relates closely with the theme of escape (*nissaraṇa*). **Sugata** is a well-known appellation of the Buddha, “the well gone” (*su-gata*) or “the welcome” (*su-āgata*): SD 15.7 (3.4).

⁹⁹ *Tassa cittaṃ sugataṃ subhāvitāṃ suvuṭṭhitāṃ suvimuttaṃ suvisaṃyuttaṃ kāmehi*. This sentence describes our successful progress in dhyana meditation, from the moment we overcome the mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*: those of sensual desire, of ill will, of sloth and torpor, of restlessness and worry, of doubt; see SD 32.1), emerging from it, directing it to overcoming the mental fetters and gaining the path, even up to arhathood [§4 etc].

4 And he is freed from those influxes,¹⁰⁰ troubling and feverish, that arise with *sensual pleasures* as condition. He feels not that feeling.¹⁰¹

5 This is declared to be the escape from sensual pleasures.

(2) Ill will and good will

6 [3] Further, bhikshus, when a monk is attending to **ill will**, his mind does not leap into it, does not brighten up, does not settle, indulges not in it.

7 But when he is attending to **good will** [non-ill will],¹⁰² his mind leaps into it, brightens up, settles, pervades it.

7.2 His mind is well gone, well cultivated, well emerged, well freed, well detached from ill will.

8 And he is freed from those influxes, troubling and feverish, that arise with *ill will* as condition. He feels not that feeling.¹⁰³

9 *This is declared to be the escape from ill will.*

(3) Harming and non-harming

10 [4] Further, bhikshus, when a monk is attending to (the thought of) **harming**,¹⁰⁴ his mind does not leap into it, does not brighten up, does not settle, indulges not in them.

11 But when he is attending to **non-harming**,¹⁰⁵ his mind leaps into it, brightens up, settles, pervades it.

11.2 His mind is well gone, well cultivated, well emerged, well freed, well detached from *harming*.

12 And he is freed from those influxes, troubling and feverish, that arise with *harming* as condition. He feels not that feeling.¹⁰⁶

13 *This is declared to be the escape from harming. [246]*

¹⁰⁰ "Influxes," *āsava* (lit, "inflow, outflow") has been variously tr as "taints, corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence)," or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām'āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav'āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16,2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as "floods" (*ogha*) and "yokes" (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is prob older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 33,1.10(20)/3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). See BDict under *āsava*.

¹⁰¹ *Ye ca kāma,paccayā uppajjanti āsavā vighāta,pariāhā, mutto so tehi, na so taṃ vedanaṃ vediyati*. On the underscored, Comy says: "He does not feel that sensual feeling or that distressful and feverish feeling" (AA 3:322,2 f).

¹⁰² "Good will [non-ill will]," *avyāpāda* (Be *abyāpāda*), which is a synonym for lovingkindness (*mettā*). This refers to the attaining of dhyana by lovingkindness (AA 3:322,10 f). Lovingkindness and compassion can only bring us up to the 3rd dhyana [SD 15.1: Fig 8.1].

¹⁰³ See §4 n ad loc.

¹⁰⁴ "Harming," *vihesam* (ie, the thought of causing harm to others); from *vihesā* (near-synonym of *vihimsā*, "violence") vexation, annoyance, injury; worry: V 4:143; D 3:240 *avihesā*; M 1:510, 2:241 f; S 1:136, 3:132, 4:73, 5:357; A 3:245, 291; Sn 247, 275, 277; Vbh 369.

¹⁰⁵ "Non-harming" (*avihesā*), ie, compassion (*karuṇā*); this refers to attaining the dhyana of compassion (AA 3:322,11 f). Compassion, like lovingkindness, can only bring us up to the 3rd dhyana [SD 15.1: Fig 8.1].

¹⁰⁶ See §4 n ad loc.

(4) Form and the formless

14 [5] Further, bhikshus, when a monk is attending to **form**,¹⁰⁷ his mind does not leap into it, does not brighten up, does not settle, indulges not in it.

14.2 But when he is attending to **the formless**, his mind leaps into it, brightens up, settles, pervades it.

15 His mind is well gone, well developed, well emerged, well freed, well detached from *form*.

16 And he is freed from those influxes, troubling and feverish, that arise with *form* as condition. He feels not that feeling.¹⁰⁸

17 *This is declared to be the escape from form.*

(5) Self-identity and its cessation

18 [6] Further, bhikshus, when a monk is attending to **self-identity**,¹⁰⁹ his mind does not leap into it, does not brighten up, does not settle, indulges not in it.

19 But when he is attending to **the cessation of self-identity**, his mind leaps into it, brightens up, settles, pervades it.

19.2 His mind is well gone, well cultivated, well emerged, well freed, well detached from self-identity.

20 And he is freed from those influxes, troubling and feverish, that arise with *self-identity* as condition. He feels not that feeling.¹¹⁰

21 *This is declared to be the escape from self-identity.*

Ending the latent tendencies

22 Delight in <u>sensual pleasures</u>	lies not latent in him; ¹¹¹	<i>tassa kāma,nandī</i>	<i>pi nānuseti</i>
delight in <u>ill will</u>	lies not latent in him;	<i>vyāpāda,nandī</i>	<i>pi nānuseti</i>
delight in <u>harming</u>	lies not latent in him;	<i>vihesā,nandī</i>	<i>pi nānuseti</i>
delight in <u>form</u>	lies not latent in him;	<i>rūpa,nandī</i>	<i>pi nānuseti</i>
delight in <u>self-identity</u>	lies not latent in him.	<i>sakkāya,nandī</i>	<i>pi nānuseti</i>

23 Since he is **without latent tendencies**¹¹² that is the delight in *sensual pleasures*, the delight in *ill will*, the delight in *harming*, the delight in *form*, the delight in *self-identity*, he, bhikshus, is called **a monk without latent tendencies**.¹¹³

24 He has cut off craving, undone the fetter; by totally breaking through conceit, he has made an end of suffering.¹¹⁴

25 These, bhikshus, are **the 5 elements of escape.**" [247]

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¹⁰⁷ "Form," *rūpaṃ* (sg) Be Ee so; Ce *rupe*; Se *rūpesu*. Although *rūpaṃ* is a sg noun, from its context it has a plural sens. Note that Ce and Se readings are both in the pl (which are also applicable). We have here in Pali and in English an uncountable n. [2.2.2].

¹⁰⁸ See §4 n ad loc.

¹⁰⁹ On delighting in self-identity, see (2.2.3).

¹¹⁰ See §4 n ad loc.

¹¹¹ "Lies not latent," *nānuseti*; Comy glosses with "does not arise" (*na nibbattati*, AA 3:322,26).

¹¹² On the latent tendencies, see *Anusaya* (SD 31.3), esp (1.2).

¹¹³ *Bhikkhu niranusayo*.

¹¹⁴ *Acchecchi taṅhaṃ vivattayi sammā manābhīsamayā antam akāsi dukkhassa*. This is stock: **Vitakka Saṅghāna S** (M 20/1:122), SD 1.6; (**Sattaka**) **Pahāna S** (A 7.9/4:8); **Vedanā S 2** (It 53/3.1.4/47).